

# Passion for refit

With modern facilities in Genoa and Loano, Amico & Co is about to invest in new infrastructure to continue refitting and repairing some of the world's largest superyachts

**JAKE KAVANAGH REPORTS**



Amico is based in the heart of Genoa on Italy's north west coast. It is soon to supplement Europe's largest travel lift with a 100m graving dock

**P**roudly owned and run by its founding family, Amico & Co is a modern refit base located in the commercial port of Genoa in north-west Italy, just 100km to the east of the French border.

Three years ago, the company extended its reach by opening a satellite yard, Amico Loano, in the newly created Marina Di Loano, West Liguria, while back at Genoa it now plans to build a 100m fully-covered graving dock alongside its main workshops.

Investment in major new infrastructure is always the sign of a healthy yard, and the new graving dock will compliment three others Amico has access to nearby.

“The top end of the superyacht market continues to grow,” explained CEO Alberto Amico. “Nowadays, 60m-70m is a popular size, and we’ve seen many of our customers moving up.”

Amico handles around 100 projects a year, from relatively minor repairs right through to full refits lasting a year or more, but has never lost sight of its shipbuilding heritage. The

business can trace its roots back to 1799, when master builder Matteo Amico set up a yard in Loano. With the arrival of the age of steam, the yard thrived and was relocated to Genoa by Michele Amico, a descendant of Matteo. His son Luigi registered the yard as a harbour company in 1920, and it continued to prosper as a leader in ship repair and refit.

In the late 1980s, Guido Amico applied to

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**A new administration building was built on site in 2009. Large workshops are below the second floor offices, which also feature a crew recreation room**



the port authorities to open a new shipyard dedicated exclusively to the refit and repair of large yachts.

“We were already the preferred partner and supplier to major shipping companies such as MSC, Carnival Line and Costa,” Amico said. “We also offered our services to other shipyards. We particularly specialised in areas such as anti-corrosion treatments and paint finishes, and this commercial experience has allowed us to offer high-quality work but at a competitive price. As my father was a keen sailor, and owned a modest sailing cruiser, he realised that it was quite difficult to find a good professional refit yard for yachts, so we decided to set one up.”

After making an application to the Genoa port authority, a plot of land in the east of the harbour became available, and in 1991 Guido and Alberto founded Amico & Co. They set about running the business in the same way as their commercial operation, with a modern infrastructure and an in-house team of skilled craftsmen offering top quality work with a quick turnaround.

### Modern yard layout

From fairly modest beginnings, the facilities on this 30,000m<sup>2</sup> site have been regularly upgraded and improved, with the imposing administration block the latest addition in 2009.

The central part of the yard consists of a large open expanse of reinforced



## TOP VIEW

**ALBERTO AMICO**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

**A**s a sixth generation of the Amico shipbuilding dynasty, Alberto Amico has grown up in the family business. As a child, he assisted his father at the Amico shipyards and sailed with him in the family yacht, learning about the sea and the leisure industry. Graduating as an electrical engineer in 1988, he was the co-founder of the yacht refit business in 1991 and had no illusions about what was expected of the new venture.

“Our USP is craftsmanship,” Amico said. “Our aim is to get the very best out of our facilities. Other yards tend to subcontract about 90 per cent of their work, but this isn’t always very efficient in terms of the final price. Our strategy is to bring a big part of the work in-house using established facilities and craftsmen, so we can offer a price to the owner that doesn’t exceed a specialist contractor. In fact, one paint specialist asked me how I could consistently undercut him by as much as 20 per cent. It’s to do with the organisation of the shipyard, and the efficiencies that can be made. For example, hiring space in an



**Alberto Amico is the sixth generation in running the family business, and is a qualified marine engineer**

ourselves bidding against an average of 10 yards for each job. However, we are also winning work away from other yards as reliability and the warranty offered become more important than just the bottom line, especially on a well-managed yacht. This means we are usually the first or second yard approached, and between September 2012 and April 2013 we completed 70 major refits, with a great deal of our custom coming from repeat clients and word of mouth.

## Our new graving dock will allow us to move more towards the segment of the market that appreciates our reputation

established shed is just 25 per cent the cost of having a temporary shelter built over your yacht. Everything needed is available, and we have great teamwork, something you don’t hear mentioned very often in other shipyards. Our people know each other well, and a connected team allows for far greater speed, which means lower costs for each project. We keep the management structure simple, with a good relationship between the various trades.

“We have seen a steady rise in business by investing in our facilities. When we began our paint service, we were the first yard in the Med to offer a 42m paint shed — now we have 10. Over the past eight years, our yard has grown exponentially, although the crisis of 2008 brought some major changes. The market has become much more careful, and we have found

“When we launched Amico & Co in 1991, around 80 per cent of our clients were Italian. Now, the balance is just five per cent Italian, part of the 50 per cent of the clients from Europe, with the remainder from the rest of the world, particularly Asia and America.

“Yachts are definitely getting bigger. We’ve lost some of the smaller ones, but the 50m sector is still strong, and the 70m+ sector continues to grow. Our new graving dock will allow us to move more towards the segment of the market that appreciates our reputation. We are in a strong position to gain more volume from other yards, despite the increasing competition, and part of our strategy will be to continue investing in new infrastructure to allow us to be even more efficient in the future.” **SB**





**Yachts' crew often remain on site and use the time to conduct cosmetic work with the yards assistance and mobile infrastructure**

hardstanding, served by two travel lifts, one of 835t (reputed to be the largest in Europe, and the third largest in the world) and the second of 320t. Supplementing these monsters is a fleet of smaller cranes, transporters and cherry pickers for complete access to each project.

The hardstanding can support vessels of up to 60m, and opens out on to a well-sheltered technical marina of 20,000m<sup>2</sup>, providing 20 refit berths, eight of them alongside the wide quay and the inside of the breakwater. The marina is able to conveniently dock yachts of up to 110m, with full connection to three-phase power and vehicular access for refuelling and deliveries. The hardstanding is flanked on two sides by 900m<sup>2</sup> of offices, 4,500m<sup>2</sup> of workshops, and 10 covered refit and repair bays. There are also two fully equipped paint booths for smaller components, and tenders of up to 9m. The scale of Amico's yard allows it to handle up to 35 large projects at the same time.

Arriving at the facility by taxi, our first indication that it was busy was a 20m yacht temporarily blocking the main gate. However, space was becoming available again after the strong demand for winter refits, and a large number of yachts had already been launched in time for the Mediterranean charter season. Once we were through security, a lift took us to the second floor of the aluminium-clad office block, which houses most of the administration staff and project management team. From the balcony, we had a bird's-eye view of the hardstanding and marina, and the compact city of Genoa nearby. Several projects were under temporary workshops around the edge, with a higher mix of sail to power than we usually see in refit facilities. This was no real surprise, as Amico has a reputation for faithfully refitting classic wooden sailing

## GRAVING DOCK

Amico has access to three large graving docks a short distance from the main facility and shared with three other refit specialists. Amico has equipped one of the docks with a telescopic 75m sliding cover for repainting work with full extraction and overspray recovery. The dock can be divided into 75m and 108m sections with the use of a floating gate, and can accommodate vessels of up to 20m beam.



## TECHNICAL MARINA

As minor refits and repairs can often be done afloat, Amico has its own marina covering 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of water to a depth of 5m (low water slack), allowing large sailing yachts to be berthed alongside. All 20 berths are fully served with three phase power and fresh water, and security patrols at night. The berth nearest the quay will be turned into a 100m covered graving dock later in 2013.



yachts. As we watched, the three-masted 62m (203ft) *Baboon* was being expertly eased into the main travel lift, her 444t steel hull canting to port slightly as she was emptied of fuel and fresh water to lighten the load.

### Teamwork is crucial

Amico lists its services under four main departments: engineering, painting, interiors and deck. Its objective is to deliver these services with full project management and seamless co-operation between all disciplines, particularly important on a major refit, but key to delivering a distinct price advantage over an 'open' yard. Our guide for the tour was marketing assistant Alessia Giacobbe, and we started in the carpentry area.

Amico is very proud of the high skill levels it can offer, and while it uses its own in-house teams, it also has a small number of retained and trusted subcontractors, some of which have their own workshops on site. This allows a greater degree of flexibility during busy periods, and also allows the yard to concentrate on teamwork.

The well-equipped joinery workshops are able to make bespoke items of furniture to match — or entirely replace — a yacht's existing layout, and we took note of the modern machinery available, including a new CNC cutter. A large storage area nearby held stocks of mahogany, teak and various plywoods for immediate use, and for really specialist items of upholstery or interior décor,

## AMICO AERIAL VIEW



### 75m REFIT SHEDS

Measuring 60m deep, these three sheds are the largest currently available in the area. With walls 50mm thick, and well insulated against the elements, they are used for major paint jobs as well as more complex refits. Having access to a permanent shed shaves up to 75 per cent off the costs of covered space for a project, especially those yachts with high superstructures that would otherwise require a very tall temporary cover.



### 835T TRAVEL LIFT

Reputed to be the largest travel hoist in Europe, this machine is capable of lifting 835t with a good margin of safety. It moves vessels of up to 60m on to the hardstanding area, or into any one of the 10 refit sheds that orbit the central yard. A smaller lift of 330t is also available and the quayside features two travel lift bays. Amico has a dedicated team of transport staff to operate these.

else, including our retained subcontractors, which makes for great teamwork.”

We watched as a large passerelle was being modified, and the English-speaking technician explained that some of the daily workload involves basic re-engineering. “I think some items were originally installed by a T. rex,” he grinned, mimicking a pair of short, stumpy arms. Because of its ship repair heritage, Amico has a can-do attitude when tackling any engineering problem, however complex. The company is an authorised service centre for MTU, Caterpillar and Northern Lights, and undertakes everything from routine maintenance and major servicing to complete reposer packages. Last year, it worked on 18 major engine overhauls on site, along with the more routine shaft extractions and realignments, new stabiliser installations and vibration measurement and analysis.

Every job provides information and feedback, and this is all captured in a working procedures and information management system called AMIS, custom-made by Amico after its first 10 years of operation. Every detail of a task is logged, including initial evaluation, planning, budgeting and quality control, and the data stored as a reference for future projects. AMIS is in a constant state of evolution, and is a useful tool when working on Class and Flag State requirements.

From the engineering shop, a walk across the hardstanding took us past the three

a number of trusted firms are available locally.

Below the joinery shop was a small stainless steel fabrication department, with a team dedicated to the careful removal and

vehicular access. “You can tell which department the craftsmen work in by the colour of their overalls,” Giacobbe explained. “For example, electricians are in blue, and

**We have a** permanent staff of around 70. Everyone knows everyone else, including our retained subcontractors, which makes for great teamwork

storage of a yacht’s fittings prior to major works. Next door was the 9,000m<sup>2</sup> engineering department, with its own office and management team strategically located near the tall entrance, which offers excellent

carpenters are in brown.” Our first impression was of the friendly banter between the departmental staff as they bustled about the yard. “We have a permanent staff of around 70,” Giacobbe said. “Everyone knows everyone



## CLASSIC JOINERY

With skilled carpenters on site and access to many local specialists, Amico offers bespoke refits on classic wooden vessels. In the joinery shop, run by a retained subcontractor, a vast array of woodworking machinery and stock timber is available to create everything from large wooden laminated ribs to complete interiors.



## THE LARGE SHEDS



## ELECTRICAL EXPERTISE

All the yachts have access to 250A three-phase shorepower when moored in the technical marina and ashore on the hardstanding, but the yard is also able to supply a 550kW resistor load bank to test devices such as generators. An electrical team is able to provide rewiring and installation work for the most advanced systems currently available.



**Amico specialises in classic yacht refits, and arranges temporary workshops for vessels hauled out. Yachts using any of the 10 refit sheds can make significant savings**

large sheds that dominate the northern perimeter of the yard. These each measure 30m tall by 20m wide and 60m deep, and have walls 50mm thick. Customers appreciate the convenience, as it allows their yacht to be lifted and placed undercover within a day, and gives full protection throughout the refit.

Painting is a speciality of the yard, and apart from the high level of final finishing to standards exceeding ISO 2813 and ASTM D 5767-A, a separate company, Luigi Amico Srl, focuses on bare metal preparation and anti-corrosion treatments. In one of the nearby sheds, a 60m yacht was in the final

stages of its primer coat, and was about to receive the first of several layers of Awlgrip for a mirror-like finish.

Noting the deceptive size of the construction sheds, we saw the sheer diversity of the yachts being worked on. In total, there were 25 projects underway, some afloat but the majority ashore. These included a striking blue-hulled 50m Wally sailing yacht, a 50m Benetti, and a 74m Nobiskrug, while in one of the sheds a remarkable US navy tug conversion from 1935 was receiving a covering of new steel plates on its workmanlike hull. Everywhere we looked,

crew members from the various yachts were tackling less onerous tasks, with anchor painting and chain calibration the most popular job of the day.

Back in the main office, we were shown the new crew facility, which is open 24/7 and provides a games room, cooking facilities and internet connections for personnel staying with their yacht. Genoa is a popular place for a refit as the historic centre is a 15-minute walk away, and the airport, which has private jet facilities, is 25-minutes by car. Amico offers a concierge service, providing visiting owners and crews with car



## ENGINEERING

Amico has a permanent team of 15 engineers with access to a modern workshop. The engineers have their own office and project manager, and as official service agents for MTU, Caterpillar and Northern Lights, regularly arrange full services, repowers and new installations. They also conduct borescopic and compression tests, optically check shaft alignments and fit stabilisers.



## ADVANCED PAINT TREATMENT

Painting is an area where Amico has earned itself an enviable reputation, for both quality and competitive costs. The yard offers all this in-house, from the paint sheds through to the smaller spray booths for colour matching components and the teams of specialist sprayers. All the equipment needed is already in place, rather than having to be assembled by subcontractors.

and scooter hire, accommodation, tourist advice and reservations, along with container storage and freight services. The Alps, too, are tantalisingly close for those with a passion for skiing, and one snow-capped mountain was visible from the yard.

### Branching out at Amico Loano

A short sea passage to the west will take you to the town of Loano, Amico's birth place and now the location for a new marina

plus enquiries from new ones." The town of Loano is also a very pleasant place to stay, with a long stretch of well-managed beach and plenty of good restaurants. Security at the yard is excellent, and the main shed has an engineering workshop, a carpentry shop, and a paint booth. Projects ashore can also be fully enclosed for full paint services, and crews have access to a number of smaller cranes and hydraulic platforms for routine servicing. With the marina due to have an increase in

dock right beside its own quay.

"This will make us much more efficient," explained Filippo Censi Buffarini, Amico's technical and customer care manager. Formerly an employee of Riva and Benetti, he has been with Amico since 1999, and travels widely to visit clients prior to each refit. A close relationship with each customer is a vital part of the service.

"We are going to build this graving dock to our exact requirements, and based on all the experience we have gathered over the years," said Buffarini. "It will be a major investment, but will guarantee we can continue to offer a competitively priced service to yachts of up to 100m, which seems to be the direction in which the market is heading." **SB**

**Every detail of** a task is logged, including initial evaluation, planning, budgeting and quality control, and the data stored as a reference for future projects

completed just before the full impact of the financial crisis. Set into the eastern corner is Amico's new yard, covering a total of 8,500m<sup>2</sup> and able to haul out vessels of up to 550t, thanks to Genoa's main travel lift being shipped here after being superseded by its new 835-tonner.

"We were busy from the day we opened," said shipyard director Gianmarco Franceschi. "With Amico's reputation in Genoa, we had no shortage of business from existing customers,

superyacht facilities (see Infrastructure, page 10) during 2013, this branch of Amico is set to become busier yet.

Back in Genoa, our final visit was to the three large (180m) graving docks a short stroll from the main gate. These are run jointly with two other companies, with one of the docks sporting a sliding cover, and a gate that cuts the dock in half. While a key asset, Amico is looking forward to the convenience of a purpose-built graving

**TO SEE SB'S** interview with Alberto Amico — and have a tour of the yard — simply use your

smartphone to scan the QR code (right). A good QR reader app will automatically redirect you to our informative links and exclusive videos.





Amico has a smaller (8,000m<sup>2</sup>) facility at the modern Marina Di Loano, about 80km west of Genoa. Here, vessels of up to 50m can be hauled out using a 550t travel hoist



## AMICO & CO CURRENT PROJECTS

### SAMPLE OF YACHTS BEING REFITTED AT AMICO GENOA DURING SB'S VISIT — APRIL 2013

During our visit in April 2013, there were 25 projects under refit in the yard. This is a selection of the most notable projects to illustrate the diversity of the work being carried out

#### 50M BENETTI MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Full paint job
- ▶ Small structural alteration for installation of new cranes
- ▶ W5 service on MTU main engines
- ▶ Refurbishment of aft garage into a beach club
- ▶ Tailshaft and rudder dismantling inspection and service
- ▶ Service of diesel generator
- ▶ Service and repair of passerelle and side boarding ladder

#### 52M AMELS MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Major overhauling of diesel generator
- ▶ Various engineering repair and improvements

#### 60M NAVE ITALIA SAILING YACHT

- ▶ Replacement of tank tops steel plate

- ▶ Complete refurbishment of exterior planks lining of wheelhouse

#### 37M CLASSIC SAILING YACHT

- ▶ Hull topside full paint job
- ▶ Partial replacement of hull planking
- ▶ Complete refurbishment of seals of hull planks

#### 51M CODECASA MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Full paint job with metallised topcoat

#### 62M CLASSIC SAILING YACHT

- ▶ Steel structural repair in tanks
- ▶ Hull sandblasting and anti-corrosive full treatment

#### M47M HESSEN MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Full paint job
- ▶ W5 service of MTU main engine

#### 74M NOBISKRUG MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Various engineering works
- ▶ Small interior refurbishment
- ▶ New furniture on sun deck

#### 50M CODECASA MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Partial replacement of teak decking
- ▶ Complete refurbishment of deck rubber caulking

#### 37M YACHTING DEVELOPMENTS NZ

- ▶ Full paint job on deck
- ▶ Various engineering jobs
- ▶ Shaft removal for inspection
- ▶ Top end service on main engines
- ▶ Major overhauling of diesel generators

#### 44M SHADOW MARINE MOTORYACHT

- ▶ Full paint job

#### 30M CLASSIC US NAVY TUG

- ▶ Full refit and conversion to pleasure yacht

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